

Today, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Committee passed HR 2828, a bill to provide compensation to relatives of United States citizens who were killed as a result of the bombings of United States Embassies in East Africa on August 7, 1998. Congressman Jesse L. Jackson, Jr. (D-IL-2nd) along with Republican Whip Roy Blunt (R-MO-7th) introduced HR 2828 on June 6, 2007. The full House is expected to take up the measure as early as next week.

Congressman Jackson said, "I am very pleased the Foreign Affairs committee passed this important bill. Like the families of 9/11, the families of the Nairobi embassy bombing also suffered from al Qaeda attacks. This bill provides the victim's families with the appropriate compensation and sense of closure that they so rightfully deserve. For nine years, these families have waited for the U.S. government to act and provide proper redress. Now, the wait is over."

Karen Hastie Williams, an attorney for the families of the victims killed at the embassy in Nairobi added, "The families are deeply appreciative of the bi-partisan leadership of Congressman Jackson and Congressman Blunt in pursuing the adoption of H.R. 2828. The families foresee the opportunity to have closure on this matter within the next several months."

On August 7, 1998 an al Qaeda truck bomb exploded at the American Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, killing 12 American employees. The U.S. intelligence community had been surveilling several al Qaeda associates in Nairobi for two years, yet that information was not shared with the diplomats bidding on assignments in Nairobi.

Members of al Qaeda were convicted of the bombing in New York Federal District Court in 2001. Government witnesses at the trial testified that intelligence and security reports from several different sources had confirmed the presence of an al Qaeda cell in Nairobi and the likelihood that the location of the embassy exposed the employees to an attack given the proximity to the street, yet the State Department failed to act on these intelligence reports.

The Accountability Review Board, established to examine the facts and circumstances surrounding the embassy bombings, found that the bombings were the result of a "collective failure of several administrations and Congresses over the past decade to invest adequate efforts and resources to reduce the vulnerability of US diplomatic missions around the world to terrorist attacks.}